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## New information on the distribution of White-fronted *Microhierax latifrons* and Black-thighed Falconets *M. fringillarius* in Kalimantan, Indonesia

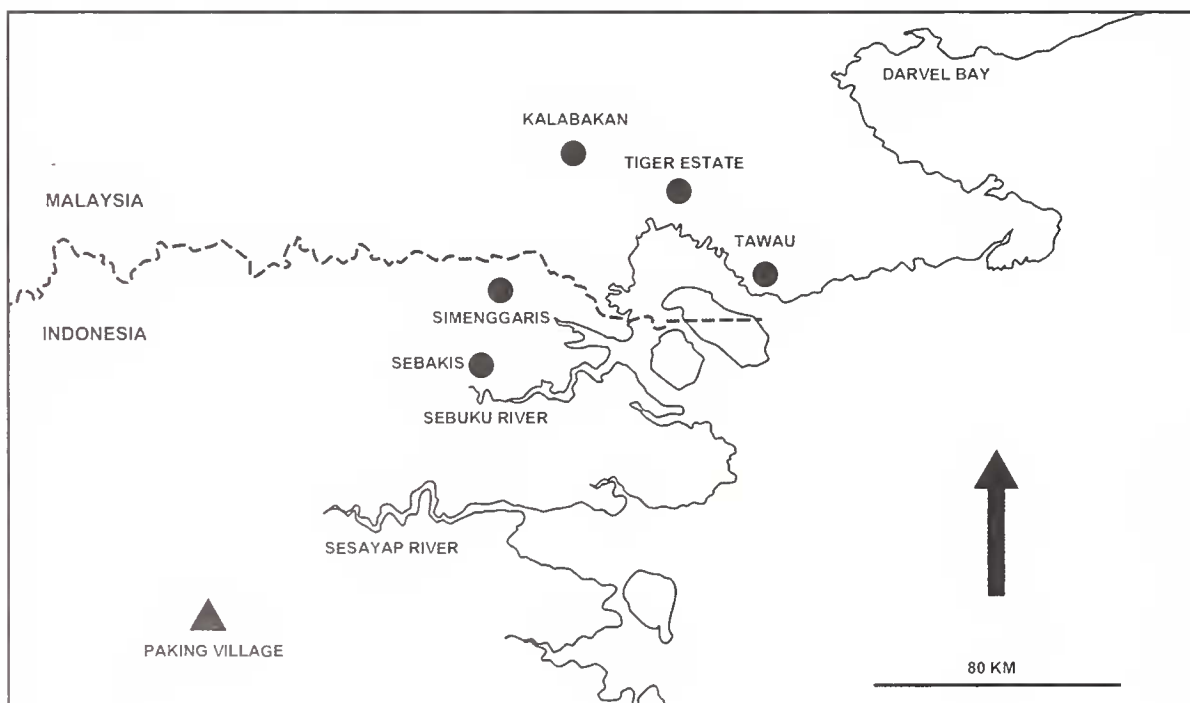
MOHAMMAD IRHAM, E. MEIJAARD & S. (BAS) VAN BALEN

The White-fronted Falconet *Microhierax latifrons* is well-known as the near-endemic falconet in Sabah (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001, Sheldon *et al.* 2001, Mann 2008). Although it is a forest-edge species, it is listed as Near Threatened owing to its restricted range and reliance on lowland forests coupled with the likely decline and degradation of these habitats (BirdLife International 2012). To the west and south of its range, its congener the Black-thighed Falconet *M. fringillarius* occupies the remaining, larger part of the island of Borneo.

During a biodiversity survey in East Kalimantan (Indonesian territory), on 1 June 2011, at 08h15 to 08h20, MI saw two individuals of male White-fronted Falconet in the Simenggaris area of Nunukan

Regency, East Kalimantan Province, Indonesia (4°27'N 117°16'E; Figure 1). This site is located c.20 km south by the main road to the border between Indonesia and Sabah (Malaysia).

The falconets had white forecrowns extending to above the rear end of their eyes, plain black upperparts, underparts white from throat to breast, tawny-coloured belly, black flanks and undertail (Plate 1). They were easily distinguished from Black-thighed Falconet by an unbarred blackish undertail, no curved white line behind the eyes and a tawny rather than rufous abdomen. When first spotted, the falconets were perched on the top of a c.20 m tall snag along a logging road through secondary forest. One bird was eating a cicada while the other watched for flying prey insects (Plate



**Figure 1.** Localities of records of White-fronted Falconet *Microhierax latifrons* (dots) and Black-thighed Falconet *M. fringillarius* (triangle).



**Plate 1.** Two male White-fronted Falconets *Microhierax latifrons*, 1 June 2011, Nunukan, East Kalimantan (M. Irham).

1). Several hunting manoeuvres were observed in which insects were caught in the air with a loop flight and consumed in c.2 minutes after returning to the initial posts.

The present record confirms an earlier tentative one of the species in Kalimantan: on 24 June 2005, EM and M. Leighton saw a group of five falconets c.40 km south from the Sabah border, north of the Sebuku River, in Sebakis (c.4°05'N 117°10'E), the northernmost forest block within PT Adindo's concession area (Nunukan district, East Kalimantan Province; Figure 1). The birds were hunting for insects towards dusk from the top of a tall, leafless tree in logged-over forest. Although the birds were quite well seen (at 50 m using 7×40 binoculars), and a large forehead-patch, black eye-stripe and yellowish rather than rusty wash on the lower breast identified them as White-fronted Falconets, this record was treated as tentative because of the poor light conditions.

The distribution of the White-fronted Falconet was traditionally defined as nearly exclusively Sabah territory, south to the Lawas River (west coast, Sarawak) and Darvel Bay (east coast) (Smythies 1999, Mann 2008). Previous records of the falconet nearest to the present area include Kinabatangan, Tiger Estate and Tawau (Thompson 1966, Sheldon *et al.* 2001; Figure 1), at 50–80 km north-east to east of Simenggaris.

The records above redefine the ranges of both species of falconet on Borneo, where a record of a Black-thighed Falconet seen on 15 November 1997 by SvB (O'Brien 1997) near Paking village (c.3°30'N 116°30'E, Malinau district, East Kalimantan; Figure 1), is the northernmost for the species in its eastern range. This suggests that the two species may occur sympatrically in the transition zone between their respective ranges. In the area between the rivers Sebuku and Sesayap no falconets have to date been recorded and it is therefore unclear which of the two rivers may act as an effective natural boundary, or even what biological or physical mechanism separates the two species. The ranges of the two Bornean falconet species reflect those of White-crowned Shama *Copsychus stricklandii* and Black-and-crimson Pitta *Pitta ussheri*, which are also endemic to lowlands in the north-east part of the island and have sister taxa on the rest of Borneo (Moyle *et al.* 2005). We note, however, that for the former species Collar (2004) suggested that based on extensive hybridisation and lack of consistent morphological differences the two *Copsychus* species should be lumped (see also Lim *et al.* 2010). Additional records of *Microhierax* from the area of potential range overlap and study of museum specimens are needed to clarify whether hybrids occur, and what possible mechanisms separate the two species.

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